



**American
Forest & Paper
Association**

March 22, 2016

The Honorable Phil Serna
Board of Supervisors, District 1
Sacramento County
700 H Street, Suite 2450
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Roberta MacGlashan
Board of Supervisors, District 4
Sacramento County
700 H Street, Suite 2450
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Patrick Kennedy
Board of Supervisors, District 2
Sacramento County
700 H Street, Suite 2450
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Don Nottoli
Board of Supervisors, District 5
Sacramento County
700 H Street, Suite 2450
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Susan Peters
Board of Supervisors, District 3
Sacramento County
700 H Street, Suite 2450
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: County Ordinance to Reduce Distribution of Single-Use Plastic Bags

On behalf of the American Forest & Paper Association (AF&PA)ⁱ and the Renewable Bag Councilⁱⁱ (RBC), I am writing to express concerns about the draft Sacramento County ordinance that would ban plastic bags and impose a tax and recycled content mandate on paper bags. **We respectfully oppose this ordinance and urge you to amend the language to remove the mandated tax and recycled content requirements for paper bags.**

AF&PA and the RBC are active on this issue in states and localities across the country. We believe that all paper bags should be excluded from measures to tax retail bags on grounds that they wrongfully penalize our product—a commodity that is highly recycled, recyclable, compostable and renewable. Government imposed product taxes increase costs for consumers and can create distortions in the free flow of recoverable commodities. The bag tax unfairly targets paper products, implying they are part of the environmental problem rather than the solution.

Taxes and fees burden hard working citizens, increasing the cost of basic necessities for all citizens and disproportionately impacting those who are low-income. Additionally, imposing a tax on paper products discourages consumers from using products that are recyclable, compostable, made of recycled material, and reusable.

Our industry achieves a consistently high recovery rate. In 2014, 65.4 percent of all paper consumed in the U.S. was recovered for recycling, and the recovery rate has met or exceeded 63 percent for the past six years. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, more

paper (by weight) is recovered for recycling from municipal solid waste streams than glass, plastic, steel and aluminum combined. In 2014, 96 percent of the U.S. population had access to community curbside and/or drop-off paper recycling services. Paper recovery is an environmental success story, saving an average of 3.3 cubic yards of landfill space for each ton of paper recycled. Paper recovery has fostered a dynamic marketplace that allows recovered fiber to find its highest-value end use in manufacturing new paper and paperboard. That, in turn, helps to encourage more recycling.

Consumers who are sensitive to environmental concerns choose paper bags. Responding to consumer demands, many retailers have already voluntarily transitioned to paper. Not only are paper bags made from recycled paper, they are highly recycled themselves and are a fixture in community recycling programs throughout the state and the rest of the country.

Offering a paper bag free of charge at the point of purchase is a natural part of customer service. Many services are included in the price of the goods consumers already buy, such as rent, electricity, insurance and employee wages. Once there is an obligation to pay fees for bags, those fees are likely to increase over time.

We look forward to continuing our work with the County of Sacramento. Please feel free to contact TJ Struhs, Manager, Government Affairs, AF&PA at (202) 463-2433 or tj_struhs@afandpa.org for further information.

Sincerely,



Cathy Foley
Group Vice President

ⁱ AF&PA serves to advance a sustainable U.S. pulp, paper, packaging, and wood products manufacturing industry through fact-based public policy and marketplace advocacy. AF&PA member companies make products essential for everyday life from renewable and recyclable resources and are committed to continuous improvement through the industry's sustainability initiative - *Better Practices, Better Planet 2020*. The forest products industry accounts for approximately 4.5 percent of the total U.S. manufacturing GDP, manufactures approximately \$190 billion in products annually, and employs nearly 900,000 men and women. The industry meets a payroll of approximately \$50 billion annually and is among the top 10 manufacturing sector employers in 47 states. In California, the industry employs more than 54,000 individuals and has over 480 paper manufacturing facilities.

ⁱⁱ The Renewable Bag Council (RBC) is comprised of manufacturers and converters of renewable, recycled, recyclable and compostable Kraft paper used for checkout bags at grocery and retail outlets throughout California and across the United States. The RBC is affiliated with AF&PA. Visit the RBC online at www.renewablebag.org or follow us on Twitter @renewablebag.